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Suits and Uniforms

Turkish Foreign Policy
since the Cold War

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The central figure in the cover photograph is Ismail Cem, Foreign
Minister of Turkey 1997-2002. Reproduced by courtesy of *Hürriyet*.

*To my mother, Muriel,
and in memory of
my father, Calvert*

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PLAYERS AND PROCESSES

In thinking about the making of Turkish foreign policy two starkly contrasting images predominate. The first is that of the elite diplomat, fluent in several languages and the graduate of the best *lyées* and universities in the country, who decides upon and executes foreign policy as deliberately as any ideal-type, rational actor in the academic literature on international relations, unencumbered by the messiness of the political and wider societal process. Though this image is forged most pristinely in our recollection of Ottoman times, it remains strong and enduring in Republican Turkey. The second image is of the utter chaos of the mid-1990s, epitomised say by 1995, the year of the four foreign ministers, a time when no-one seemed to be in charge and foreign diplomats struggled to know what Turkish foreign policy was, let alone who was making it.

These may be the abiding images associated with foreign policymaking in Turkey today, but how much credence should we give to them? Are they meaningless clichés that simply mask the bureaucratic, organisational, political and personality complexities of the foreign policy-making process? Are they close approximations to reality, with forgivable analytical embellishment being used to bring out the changing styles and processes in foreign policy-making? Are they two sides of the same coin, with civil servants providing the consistency and continuity for weak and distracted politicians that typifies foreign policy in most complex democracies?

This chapter sets out to address these questions. It does so first and foremost through a consideration of which elements are indeed of most importance in Turkish foreign policymaking. The chapter shows that in Turkey foreign policymaking is a dynamic interplay between three factors: overall political context; the powers and traditions of institutions; and the personalities and priorities of the

leading players. In order to explore and develop this argument, and to show the fluctuating nature of these factors, this chapter is divided into two. First, to ensure that this does not become an ahistorical exercise, the chapter begins with a periodisation of Turkish foreign policy since the mid 1980s, and a discussion of the leading actors during these times. The latter part of the chapter is given over to a focus on the actors and institutions themselves, with a broad distinction being made on the grounds of their primary or secondary importance.

Three phases in Turkish foreign policy

Turkey has experienced three distinct phases in terms of foreign policymaking since the beginning of the end of the Cold War.¹ The first phase was the overriding personal approach closely associated with the figure of Turgut Özal, who dominated Turkish politics from the ebb of military power in the mid 1980s through to the ousting of his protégé Yıldırım Akbulut as premier in 1991. The second phase was the collegiate, bureaucratic approach, in which for most of the time foreign minister Hikmet Çetin worked closely with the staff of the Foreign Ministry to produce carefully crafted and well co-ordinated foreign policy. The third phase has been one of a weak, fragmented and competitive approach, with foreign policymaking since 1994 reflecting the clutter and confusion of domestic party politics.

1. OVERRIDING PERSONAL APPROACH, 1986–91

The period of the pursuit of an enhanced, personalised foreign policy is most closely identified with Turgut Özal, who was Turkish prime minister between 1983 and 1989 and president of the republic between 1989 and his death in 1993. During such a period of great upheavals in the international system, Turkey had a man of vision and quick wits as its helm. After a careful start, in the wake of rule by the generals, Özal came increasingly to dominate civilian politics. From his sweeping election victory in 1983, in which he outwitted the military, until the ousting of Yıldırım Akbulut

¹ Taken to correspond roughly with the rise to power of the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

in 1991,² Özal is widely regarded as having transformed the policy-making context. 'For a one-line guide to current Turkish affairs,' it was written in the *The Economist* survey of Turkey in June 1988, 'you can do worse than this: for Thatcher, read Özal.'³

In trying to extend his influence over foreign affairs, Özal had to circumscribe the influence of the security forces, often referred to as behaving 'like a state within a state'. Özal faced the additional constraint of the leader of the original coup, Kenan Evren, occupying the presidency from 1982 to 1989. In foreign policy, as with security and education affairs, President Evren sought to exert critical leadership. Özal was helped in his quest to re-civilianise politics by knowing the military well, both as an institution and as a set of individuals, by virtue of having worked under them as economic supremo during most of the time the generals directly wielded power. He was therefore well placed to judge when and when not to try to push back the authority of the military.⁴

Özal began his tenure as premier cautiously, and suffered reversals at the hands of President Evren, especially in terms of the composition of his cabinets. Indeed, at one stage the president even proved able to force Özal to sack his foreign minister. These reversals did not, however, intimidate Özal. When he felt strong enough he steadily pushed back the influence of the military. When, for example, he discovered that Turkey's main intelligence agency, the MIT (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı*) was giving more information to President Evren than to him, he forced through a new head of his choice, making the symbolic statement of appointing someone from a civilian background. As the decade went on and Özal became more confident so he looked to assert himself and the role of the civilian

domain at the expense of the military. Consequently, he named airport and a major monument after Adnan Menderes, the prime minister removed by the military in 1960 and executed a year later. He even inspected a formal guard of honour wearing a pair of shorts and a T-shirt, a public discourtesy to an institution which so highly prizes propriety and formalities.

Özal's decisive showdown with the army came in 1987 when he refused to allow the anointed general, Necdet Öztürk, to become chief of staff, instead appointing another senior figure, Necip Toruntay, to the top post. Though horrified by the move, the military chose not to try to oppose it. Özal was then more easily able to assert the primacy of civilian control in politics. However, even Toruntay had his tolerance threshold. He resigned as CGS in November 1990 over Özal's personalised handling of the Gulf crisis. Toruntay departed soon after Özal and his cousin the defence minister visited the chiefs of the various services without the chief of staff in the runup to an important meeting of decision-makers to discuss the UN ultimatum to Iraq.⁵ The internal tensions in the armed forces caused by Özal's handling of the 1987 appointment issue helped to ensure that resignation was the only lever in the hands of Toruntay.⁶

In addition to circumscribing the military's role in policymaking, foreign affairs included, Özal also brought in and brought on a new generation of younger, educated technocrats, who were attuned to his dynamic and reformist approach. While most of these were to be found in the realm of economic policy, there was also an important cluster in the domain of foreign affairs. When Özal first became premier, diplomats like Özdemir Sanberk and Cem Duna were brought into the prime minister's office to be his personal advisers, making them at a stroke more influential than even the serving under-secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷ When Özal became president his Foreign Ministry advisers included people like Kaya Toperi, and Nabi Şensoy, who was his *chef de cabinet*. In all cases it was the ease and regularity of access which made these figures so influential.

² Özal was elected president in October 1989 by a parliament still dominated by his Motherland party. He then engineered Akbulut's succession to the premiership, but continued to pull the strings of his puppet, regularly chairing cabinet meetings. In the words of one US State Department official working on Turkey, Akbulut just faded away. Interview, Washington DC, 20 April 1990.

³ *The Economist* Survey of Turkey entitled 'Getting Ready for Europe', 18–24 June 1988, p. 4.

⁴ For a discussion of the recivilianisation of politics in Turkey see Ahmet Evrim, 'Demilitarization and Civilianization of the Regime' in Meinn Heper and Ahmet Evrim (eds), *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic* (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1994).

⁵ *The Independent*, 4 December 1990.

⁶ *The Guardian*, 4 December 1990.

⁷ Interview with former Under Secretary, 25 January 1995.

However, it was in the areas of strategic thinking and the broad contours of policy, rather than in the detail or execution of that policy, that Özal's influence was most felt. From the Gorbachev accession, through the new thinking in the Krenlin and the transformation of the politics of Eastern Europe, virtually to the dismantling of the USSR itself, Özal was the key figure in charting Turkey's future direction in a turbulent and changing world. Özal's goal, in his words, was 'to make Turkey an influential country in its region and the world'.⁸

During this time, Özal was particularly adept at being able to spot good opportunities and, in moving quickly and with purpose, well able to exploit them. Cases abound of Özal's dynamism in foreign policy, especially in the field of foreign economic relations. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this.

The Soviet opening. Özal was always a keen exponent of the notion of complex inter-dependency. That is to say that he believed that the best way to stabilise difficult bilateral relations among states was to increase the levels of economic integration in order to increase the cost of, and hence reduce the likelihood of, breakdown, tension and conflict. Arguably, the best example of this strategy in action was in relation to Turkey's historic foe, the Soviet Union. Özal's economic embrace of Moscow was not, however, merely an alternative security strategy. It also came increasingly to make good commercial and macro-economic sense. At the forefront of this approach was the discovery and exploitation of Soviet gas, which was clearly a cheap and plentiful alternative to Middle Eastern oil. Thus Soviet gas offered the possibility of both a motor for bilateral trade and a diversification away from an over-reliance for a strategic commodity on an endemically unstable region.

A gas accord was first forged between Ankara and Moscow in 1984. Once a gas delivery pipeline across Bulgaria had been built the first gas began to flow in 1987. The supply of gas established the parameters for what was essentially a countertrade relationship between the two sides, with the 1984 agreement providing for a combination of Turkish manufactured goods and produce, and contracting services to be used in payment. In 1989 bilateral trade

was worth \$1.2 bn, triple what it had been in 1986, rising to \$1.9 bn in 1990. By the time of Özal's effective political eclipse, 4.4 bn cu.m. of gas was being exported from the USSR to Turkey each year. Such was the promise of the new trading relationship that Turkey lubricated it with export credits. Turkey's Eximbank extended two credit lines to the value of \$150 mn in 1989 for the purchase of Turkish consumer goods. A further \$350 mn by way of investment credit was extended to help finance the foreign direct investment activities of Turkish contractors, which, by the end of 1989, were involved in 30 turnkey projects ranging from hotels to a copper wire plant to a shoe factory.⁹

The Iran-Iraq war. Relations with Iran and Iraq during their eight-year conflict must also be chalked up as a major achievement for Özal. He developed a policy of 'positive neutrality' towards the two protagonists. So successful was this approach that when the two combatants eventually severed diplomatic relations they sought representation in one another's capitals through the respective Turkish missions. The strategy also yielded secondary benefits to Turkey outside the region. In the wake of the difficult relations between the United States and both Iran and Iraq, Turkey's successful diplomacy brought it a certain cachet in both US and NATO circles.¹⁰

Through the adoption of the positive neutrality approach, Özal not only stabilised relations with both Iran and Iraq at a time of potentially great volatility, but also managed to exploit good ties with Baghdad and Tehran to the benefit of the Turkish exchequer. As with the Soviet Union, Özal pursued a strategy of economic inter-dependency as a way of stabilising and softening what had been difficult bilateral relationships in the recent past. Such was the effectiveness of the policy of positive neutrality and the consequently advantageous impact on Turkey's balance of payments that even opposition political leaders were happy to commend Özal for such skill.¹¹

⁹ Reuters, Ankara, in *Jordan Times*, 1 January 1990.

¹⁰ Discussion with three State Department officials on Turkey, Washington, DC, 6 February 1989.

¹¹ For example, Bülent Ecevit speaking at Chatham House on 24 January 1989, while criticising other aspects of foreign policy, called Özal's Middle East policy 'balanced, realistic and successful'.

⁸ *Turkish Probe*, vol. 2, no. 23, 20 April 1993.

For Iran, the positive Turkish stance was a welcome relief, contrasting with the varying degrees of antipathy shown towards it by the Arab states, Syria excepted. For Iraq, Turkey offered the strategic advantage of a secure route for trade, and especially for its oil exports, its existing routes across Syria and through the Gulf having proven to be extremely vulnerable to political and military pressure respectively.

Turkey rapidly emerged as both a source of manufacturing imports for Iran and Iraq and a conduit for imports from third countries, notably European suppliers. Again, a primary commodity, in this case oil, was the motor for trade. In the 1980s Iran and Iraq dominated Turkey's Middle East import profile. Over the duration of the eight year war Turkish imports from Iran and Iraq, overwhelmingly oil, came to \$7.1 bn and \$9.1 bn respectively. In turn, Turkish exports to Iran and Iraq totalled \$5.4 bn and \$6.3 bn.¹²

The commercial benefits of this positive neutrality were not confined to trade. Iraq increased its strategic dependence on Turkey between 1976 and 1987 through the construction and expansion of two oil pipelines, with a combined capacity of 1.5 million b/d. Additional volumes of oil moved through Turkey by tanker truck in a 'moving pipeline'. As well as the indirect benefits of such traffic, Turkey also received some \$250 million a year in pipeline transit fees. Such was the success of this relationship that Iraq and Turkey agreed to the integration of their electricity grids, as part of a wider creation of economic inter-dependencies also involving Syria and Jordan. Turkish companies also received lucrative contracts in construction and heavy engineering in Iraq, with some \$2.5 bn worth of work being completed between 1974 and 1990, and more than \$1 bn worth of work outstanding at the time of the Gulf crisis.¹³ It took a contingency of the dimensions of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the global consensus in support of the introduction of UN economic sanctions under Chapter Seven of the Charter to undo a decade's worth of growing interdependence.

Iran's strategic integration with Turkey was less conventional. It was, nevertheless, still considerable, especially in the field of migration. Hundreds of thousands of Iranians settled in Turkey, especially

¹² IMF *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*, 1989; SIS Foreign Trade Statistics.

¹³ *Turkey Confidential*, no. 10, June 1990.

in parts of Istanbul, after the Iranian revolution, and much tourism and commerce between the two countries followed.

In forging ahead with these foreign economic opportunities, Özal also had to galvanise his own business sector. He did so in characteristic fashion by taking the horse to water. Most notably, wherever he travelled abroad, Özal always took several tens of Turkey's most senior and influential businessmen with him. In doing so, Özal showed an acute sense of what motivated and what would facilitate Turkey's private sector. Thus he sought to ensure that Turkey, with its newly-aligned, export-oriented economy, took advantage of every foreign opening being developed, of every high-level personal contact made in the sphere of political affairs.

During this period of overriding personal influence over foreign policy there were two main drawbacks. First, Özal's judgement was not perfect. His intuitive and sometimes impulsive decisions and statements, untempered by bureaucratic checks and balances, meant that when he was wrong the consequences were often more serious than if Turkey had been pursuing a more traditionally cautious foreign policy. One example of this was his intemperate comments to a Greek newspaper that 'The Dodecanese Islands were never Greek' and that 'if I had been İsmet İnönü I would have have gone in and taken them in 1944', a statement which he made in May 1991.¹⁴

Many point to the Gulf crisis of 1990/91 itself as an example of this. Özal supported the initial US effort against Iraq with a presidential flourish as well as substantive action.¹⁵ In doing so, he assumed that great economic and diplomatic benefits would accrue to Turkey. While one could argue that the strategic value placed on Turkey in the United States today was in great measure predicated on Özal's prompt and forthright action, the outcome of the crisis, from the continued economic sanctions against Iraq to the creation of a

¹⁴ See Selim Deringil, 'Introduction: Turkish Foreign Policy Since Atatürk' in Clement H. Dodd (ed.), *Turkish Foreign Policy, op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ There was, for example, no doubt that the decision to close the pipelines and the way in which it was done was his and his alone. On the day of the closure decision his prime minister Yıldırım Akbulut was opening a sugar factory in Kars. Interview with Western diplomat 1, Ankara, 14 November 1990.

political twilight zone in northern Iraq, have certainly not been to Turkey's advantage.

Second, Özal was bad for foreign policymaking in Turkey because of the way his *modus operandi* helped to subvert the institutionalised nature of decision-making. During his period in power Özal's personal approach to foreign relations began to undermine the rule-based system that made the bureaucracy, and especially the diplomatic service, run smoothly and effectively.¹⁶ The unsettling effect of this period can be seen in the discontinuities of contact and in the confusion of methods and procedures for contact. Perhaps the best, certainly the most high profile, example of this was Özal's telephone diplomacy with President Bush during and immediately after the Gulf crisis, and his refusal to take officials and even his foreign minister into meetings in Washington with the Americans in 1990. In that way, Özal began to establish a style and system of foreign relations which only he could operate. His attempt to build in his own indispensability simply disadvantaged Turkey as an actor once his influence waned.

The political demise of Özal was followed by a difficult adjustment period when foreign policymaking had to be re-institutionalised. This increased the challenges for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coming at a time when it was increasingly stretched by the necessities of dealing with a more complex and combustible world. Ultimately, no matter how professionally Turkey's diplomats proceeded to regularise the processes of foreign policymaking after Özal, it proved impossible to return to the level of institutionalisation evident before the advent of Özal.¹⁷ This weakening of the bureaucratic pillars

¹⁶ The controversial impact that Özal made on existing structures and processes is of course not confined to the Foreign Ministry and foreign policy. Heath Lowry, for example, in reviewing the Özal legacy, asks whether it is a case of the Turkish economic miracle or 'the fish stinks from the head'. See Heath W. Lowry, 'Betwixt and Between: Turkey's Political Structure on the Cusp of the Twenty-First Century' in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy* (Century Foundation, New York, 2000), p. 25.

¹⁷ During the years when Özal was at the height of his powers in the late 1980s it was common for Turkish bureaucrats to complain about how he was weakening the traditional ministries and building up alternative centres of authority, either through the bolstering of the standing of state ministers or through the increased use of extra-bureaucratic advisers for the development of policy. Interview with Western diplomat 2, Ankara, 14 November 1990.

of Turkish foreign policy was to have more critical consequences in the middle of the 1990s. Lesser figures, notably Tansu Çiller, were to attempt to exploit the precedent created by Özal of a more personalised style in the execution of foreign policymaking out of motives of self-interest, invariably to the detriment of the interests of the country.

II. COLLEGIATE BUREAUCRATIC APPROACH, 1991-4

In the end, the waning of Özal's power came rapidly. In April 1991 he was still supreme, in this instance in driving Western policy for the protection of the Iraqi Kurds, leading to the creation of the safe haven and Operation Provide Comfort 2. By June 1991, the stewardship of the government by Özal's 'dull witted' successor Yildirim Akbulut¹⁸ could be sustained no longer. Akbulut's successor, the former foreign minister Mesut Yılmaz, bridled against such a degree of presidential interference in a way reminiscent of Özal's struggles with Evren in earlier days. In the end, the degree to which Özal's wings had been clipped was rendered academic by ANAP's defeat in the October 1991 general election, which brought a coalition of the DYP and the Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti (SHP) to office. With Özal's great rival Süleyman Demirel back as prime minister, Özal was to suffer the frustrations of a political marginalisation from which he would not recover.

The accession to power of the DYP-SHP coalition may not, at face value, have looked very promising. There was deep division between presidency and government; the government itself comprised a two-party coalition drawn from different ideological hues; many of those participating in government were inexperienced, and even Demirel himself, nothing if not a political old stager, had been out of office for some 11 years, during which time the world had changed profoundly.

In spite of the apparently inauspicious circumstances, the period between 1991 and 1994 was to prove to be an island of ordered foreign policy management between two periods of relative chaos. In this phase, Turkey emerged as a weighty force for stability and continuity during the most turbulent phase of the post-Cold War

¹⁸ To quote Hugh and Nicole Pope in their *Turkey Unveiled* (John Murray, London, 1997), p. 265.

systemic transition. During this time, Turkey managed to harness the caution of the Kemalist era, but without succumbing to the blinkers of Kemalism, for example in its contempt for engagement in such regions as the Middle East. Increasingly, continuity and coordination came to typify government, as the system rowed back from the highly personalised approach of the Özal era through the partial re-institutionalisation of the conduct of foreign affairs. Turkish foreign policy may have been low key and unadventurous during this period, and certainly eschewed the grand initiatives of the Özal period, but, with instability and even conflict all around, this 'softly softly' approach was the perfect antidote to the tumultuous conditions of the day.

Demirel returned to the premiership having shown little inclination for foreign affairs in the past. His contribution was, however, important in laying down some general guidelines for foreign policy, notably that Turkey should not act alone but jointly with other countries, and preferably its allies, under proper international auspices.¹⁹ Beyond such parameters, he was content to give considerable leeway to his foreign minister, Hikmet Çetin, on the condition that he was kept regularly briefed. This was a generous decision in view of the fact that Çetin was a member of the junior SHP. In turn, the leader of the SHP, Erdal İnönü, who was somewhat of a gentleman politician, was also content to give his man considerable authority, not least perhaps because Çetin had a reputation for reliability, being a bit of a party apparatchik.

Demirel also showed wisdom in his decision to continue to work with the incumbent under secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Özdem Sanberk. His first inclination was to appoint a new man, because of Sanberk's close association with Özal. Demirel was persuaded to retain Sanberk on the grounds that he was in fact non-partisan, extremely able and capable of working professionally with whichever government might be in power. Thus was formed the Çetin-Sanberk team which was to serve Turkey so very well in managing the destabilising events that were to unfurl all around over the next three years.

From the establishment of the coalition in November 1991 through to Demirel's election to the presidency on 16 May 1993, Çetin and

¹⁹ *Turkey Confidential*, no. 34, December 1992, p. 12.

Sanberk, backed up by a relatively small group of senior diplomats, presided over policy-making. In general, this foreign policy management team continued to hold sway through the twin political successions, when Tansu Çiller replaced Demirel as DYP party leader and hence as premier in June 1993, and when Murat Karayalçın succeeded İnönü as leader of the SHP three months later.

Çiller was certainly different to Demirel. Erratic, inexperienced and politically extremely insecure, she was more prepared to intervene in foreign affairs than her predecessor. Indeed, she began omnivorously by appointing a senior diplomat, Volkan Vural, to be her personal adviser; shades, she might have believed, of Charles Powell to her Margaret Thatcher. Such thoughts, however, were illusory. Her interventions in foreign affairs were to remain limited owing to the necessities of constant manoeuvring at the domestic political level just to retain power, her grasp on office appearing precarious from June 1993 through to as late as September 1995.²⁰ When Mrs Çiller did dally with foreign affairs it was principally with the old Kemalist preoccupations of Europe and the US, in which her interests became increasingly those of form rather than substance. For most of the time, then, the Çetin-Sanberk team prevailed.

Çetin retained the foreign ministry until he was removed in a reallocation of the SHP portfolios in the coalition government on 27 July 1994. As has become the way in Turkish domestic politics, the reasons for his removal had little to do with the direction of Turkish foreign policy, or indeed his performance as foreign minister. Karayalçın was somewhat reluctantly pushed into a reshuffle by the growing pressures from within his parliamentary party for a re-division of the patronage spoils of office. The fact that Çetin learned of his imminent replacement through the national press, while on an official visit to Paris, simply added to the indignity of the episode.²¹ President Demirel was known to be unhappy about the removal of Çetin, the two men having continued their 'special relationship' under the Çiller premiership.²² In the face of the parochial demands of party politics, however, affairs of state were shown to be

²⁰ It is ironic that Çiller's downfall as prime minister came so soon after she had finally consolidated her hold on her own party.

²¹ *Turkish Probe*, 2 December 1994.

²² *Turkish Probe*, 29 July 1994.

of subordinate importance, a harbinger, it was to turn out, of things to come.

III. WEAK, FRAGMENTED, COMPETITIVE APPROACH, 1994-9²³

The removal of Çetin and the banality of the prevailing circumstances ushered in a third period in Turkish foreign policymaking, that of fragmentation and competition. Overall, this period has been characterised by intensive competition among largely insecure leaders at the head of weak political parties, divided, with the exception of the Islamist right, on a binary basis.²⁴ Far from proving a political clearing of the air, the December 1995 general election failed to result in a clear-cut victory for any one party. The intensified ideological clash between the old Kenalist forces, led by the military, and political Islam had exacerbated systemic instability.

More specifically in the foreign policy domain, the personality struggles, especially among the left of centre parties, together with the short lived coalition governments of the 1995-9 parliament, resulted in a large turnover in foreign ministers. It is worth noting that Turkey had nine foreign ministers between July 1994 and June 1997. Moreover, the unstable personal and party competition for power resulted in the Foreign Ministry being captured, admittedly for rather brief periods, by some decidedly hard-line and undiplomatic personalities, notably Mümtaz Soysal and Coşkun Kırca. At other times, the Foreign Ministry has simply represented a status symbol to bolster politicians in their pursuit of overall power, most particularly in the case of Tansu Çiller.

TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTERS, 1991-

Nov. 1991-July 1994	Hikmet Çetin
July 1994-Nov. 1994	Mümtaz Soysal
Nov. 1994-March 1995	Murat Karayalçın

²³ It is too early to come to firm conclusions about the Ecevit-led coalition that came to power in spring 1999. However, the ideological span of the three party coalition, which consists of the left of centre DSP, the right of centre ANAP and the ultra-nationalist MHP, together with the division of foreign affairs responsibilities, suggests that this period of weak and fragmented coalition government is continuing.

²⁴ Two main parties are competing for virtually every inch of Turkish ideological territory: for the nationalist right, BBP and MHP; for the secular right, ANAP and DYP; for the left of centre, CHP and DSP.

March 1995-Sept. 1995	Erdal İnönü
Sept.-Oct. 1995	Coşkun Kırca
Oct. 1995-Feb. 1996	Deniz Baykal
March 1996-June 1996	Emre Gönençay
June 1996-June 1997	Tansu Çiller
June 1997-	İsmail Cem

This treatment of the foreign affairs portfolio ultimately had a demoralising effect on the ministry itself. Career diplomats were able to furnish continuity in foreign policy, but only up to a point. Sanberk soldiered on at the helm of the ministry until May 1995. But the absence for long periods of a policy lead at a political level, punctuated by short bursts of overly robust leadership, such as Soysal's pursuit of an 'honourable foreign policy', helped to drain some of the authority from Turkish foreign policy. Once again, it was the Republic of Turkey which suffered as a result of these aggregated upheavals.

The lack of political leadership at the Foreign Ministry was not, it should be pointed out, merely a function of the high turnover in ministers and the differing styles and priorities of some of their number. Even a relatively lengthy incumbency was no guarantee of serious and consistent policy engagement. Tansu Çiller was foreign minister between June 1996 and June 1997, yet this 12-month 'pre-sence' did little to remedy the weaknesses of the previous couple of years. During this period Çiller also held the position of deputy prime minister, and looked forward once again to assuming the premiership upon the coalition's agreed rotation of office in June 1998. From 28 February 1997 onwards the military was actively engaged in trying to bring down the coalition and in attempting to precipitate a collapse of Çiller's party, and hence the government, through the encouragement of wholesale defections. Consequently, for much of this 12-month period, Çiller was distracted by national political, rather than foreign policy issues.

During this time Çiller rarely visited the Foreign Ministry building in Bağdat, Ankara. She kept in touch with developments in foreign affairs through briefings given to her by senior diplomatic staff. Having ensured that her nominee for secretary-general, Onur Öymen, had replaced Sanberk, she let him preside over foreign affairs. Çiller became famous among increasingly cynical Turkish diplomats for only turning up to the Foreign Ministry when there was a photo opportunity in the offing; in other words she was a foreign

minister more interested in style than substance. Even the important area of relations with the West only proved to be a limited exception. Earlier, when prime minister, Çiller had allotted little time for the negotiation of the Customs Union, in spite of its pivotal importance to closer ties with the EU, and this led to delays and bottlenecks in the system.²⁵

Neither was the confusion surrounding the political direction of foreign policy so straightforward as to be confined to a distracted foreign minister and a professional foreign service. The foreign policy of the 12-month Welfare-True Path government, the so-called Refahyol coalition, was additionally more complicated because of ideological and personal uncertainties. With the RP the dominant party in the government, Turkish foreign policy was subject to a constant and microscopic monitoring by all manner of observers and commentators to see if the new government was subjecting policy to an Islamist treatment. In fact, scrutiny of the period of the Refahyol government shows that Turkey's traditional foreign policy orientation was not adulterated; indeed, if anything, the secular, pro-Western nature of it was actually strengthened, certainly in contrast to the Ecevit-influenced Yılmaz-led coalition that was to follow between June 1997 and January 1999.

Judging the nature and content of the Refahyol foreign policy was, however, rendered more difficult because of what became an increasing division of labour on foreign policy. While Çiller concerned herself with traditional Kemalist policy preoccupations, the RP increasingly took on the hitherto largely neglected task of improving relations with the Islamic world. Indeed, the controversial creation of a Development-Eight (D-8) group of countries, most of which had large Muslim populations, in imitation of the G-8, was a foreign relations initiative worthy of Özal. Lines of responsibility with regard to foreign policy were further obscured by the emergence of an RP Minister of State, Abdullah Gül, as the man who gave the political lead on such relationships. Though the description given to him in parts of the press as being a 'shadow foreign minister' was technically inaccurate, and there were perhaps surprisingly few turf conflicts between Çiller and Gül, he certainly qualified as a *de facto* junior minister with functional and geographical responsibilities.

²⁵ Interview with former Foreign Ministry under secretary, 25 January 1995.

The collapse of the Refahyol government in June 1997, under intense and sustained pressure behind the scenes from the military, was thought by many to represent the final failure of viable government in the 1995-9 parliament. This did not prove to be the case. However, in order to put into place a government that was not dependent on the Welfare Party or the discredited Çiller, the Kemalist establishment had to go through political contortions. A three party coalition government of the secular right ANAP, the left of centre DSP and the small Democratic Turkey Party, consisting of the old Demirel supporters from DYP who had defected in an attempt to bring down Çiller, came to power under the ANAP leader Mesut Yılmaz. It was a minority government, which made it internally weak and vulnerable, and was dependent for its survival in parliament on the support of the smaller left of centre party, the CHP. In fact, with the military increasingly impatient at its unwillingness to push through anti-Islamist reform and the CHP leader Deniz Baykal increasingly threatening to scupper the coalition from the spring of 1998 onwards, the shortcomings of this ramshackle coalition were increasingly evident. Eventually it passed in January 1999, to be replaced by a DSP minority government which steered Turkey through to early elections in April 1999.

Though there was greater continuity in foreign policy at a presidential level, through the presence of İsmail Cem as foreign minister, in fact the weakness and brevity of the two governments prevented the development of clear and coherent policy. While Cem began to emerge as an effective spokesman on foreign affairs, especially towards the West, he was ineffective as a policy initiator. In fact, as in the preceding two years, policymaking was a fragmented affair. Yılmaz took a close interest in relations with the EU, only to be unable to contain his vitriol after perceiving a personal slight when the Luxembourg summit refused to give Turkey candidacy status. Ecevit, who was Yılmaz's deputy premier before leading the minority DSP government, maintained a weighty input into Cyprus policy and relations with Greece through his protégé, the equally uncompromising state minister Şükrü Sina Gürel.²⁶ Ecevit

²⁶ As one of Turkey's leading foreign policy commentators in the media, Mehmet Ali Birand, put it in a Reuters interview on 9 March 1998: 'Yılmaz turns a blind eye to Ecevit's Cyprus passion in order to keep the coalition running smoothly.'